



WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS USA

Formerly the World Organization Against Torture USA

Morton Sklar, Executive Director

March 9, 2004

Congressman Edward J. Markey
United States House of Representatives
2108 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2107

Dear Congressman Markey:

The World Organization for Human Rights USA supports H.R. 952, which would ban the U.S. government practice of rendering individuals to other nations for purposes of detention or interrogation using harsh techniques, including torture, not permitted in the U.S. or to countries where they would face the threat of torture or detention. Rendition to torture is a flagrant violation of the constitution, our country's obligations under the Convention Against Torture and its domestic implementing legislation, several other human rights treaties, and customary international human rights law.

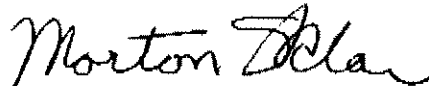
Our organization has been challenging the outsourcing of torture and filed the first direct legal challenge to the policy of rendition. On July 28, 2004, we filed a habeas corpus petition with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on behalf of the family of Ahmed Abu Ali, a U.S. citizen who was detained and interrogated in Saudi Arabia for almost two years at the request of the U.S. government. This case is particularly significant because it involves the rights of a U.S. citizen. In December 2004, U.S. District Judge John Bates issued an extraordinary decision rejecting the Government's argument that U.S. courts lack jurisdiction to review executive decisions "to deliver a United States citizen to a foreign country to avoid constitutional scrutiny, or ... [to] work through the intermediary of a foreign country to detain a United States citizen abroad." Judge Bates noted, "a citizen cannot be so easily separated from his constitutional rights," and ordered the process of discovery to begin to determine the role of the U.S. in Ahmed Abu Ali's detention and torture. In February, as discovery was about to commence, Ahmed Abu Ali was returned to the United States to face prosecution after 20 months of illegal detention without charges. His case is likely to continue to expose the grave human rights abuses inherent in the U.S. practice of rendition.

While the developments in Ahmed Abu Ali's case are a first step in ending the practice of rendition to torture, broader challenges must continue. Hundreds of other victims of rendition remain helpless in foreign prisons because we do not know who they are. In recent months, investigations by the media and accounts

from detainees have revealed more details indicating that the U.S. is engaging in a widespread and deliberate practice of rendition as a tool in the war against terror. Human Rights USA is hopeful that additional litigation on behalf of non-U.S. citizens and legislation like H.R. 952 will end this U.S. policy that has violated the rights and permitted the torture of Ahmed Abu Ali and so many others. For the unknown victims of this practice, legislation such as H.R. 952 may be their only hope of securing freedom and exposing this unlawful practice.

The World Organization for Human Rights USA commends the effort that you have made in drafting H.R. 952, and hopes that Congress by passing this bill will reaffirm our country's commitment to human rights and the absolute prohibition against torture, and will comply with the Convention Against Torture standards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Morton Sklar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Morton" being more legible than the last name "Sklar".

Morton Sklar,
Executive Director